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**MAYOR EMANUEL INTRODUCES ORDINANCE TO EXPAND SCHOOL VISION PROGRAM**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel introduced an ordinance today expanding the City of Chicago's school-based vision program to reach students in any school in the city. Services are currently available to every Chicago Public Schools (CPS) elementary and high school, including charter and option schools. The ordinance allows the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to extend these vision services to students in need at any school.

"Students can't learn effectively if they can't see the chalkboard or book in front of them," said Mayor Emanuel. "We must ensure every child in Chicago, no matter where they live or learn, has quality vision care to help them succeed."

Since the program's inception in 2013, CDPH has provided comprehensive vision services to 250,000 students and provided over 126,000 pairs of eyeglasses to CPS students. With this expansion, CDPH anticipates serving up to 4,000 students in 2019.

Many schools now ineligible for the CDPH vision program have a large concentration of low-income children. At schools supported by the Big Shoulders Fund, for instance, 85% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. In some of those schools, the figure is 100%.

"More than 80 percent of learning occurs visually, which makes vision a critical factor in a child's education," said CPS Chief Health Officer Kenneth Fox. "We rise and fall as one city. No child should go without access to necessary and preventive eye care."

Research shows that early access to eye care promotes lifelong learning and health. And providing free health services in schools frees up families' resources for housing, food and other factors in health."

"Excellence in the classroom starts with good health, including good vision, which enables students to focus on their school work," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita, MD. "Expanding this program to more low-income students is part of our ongoing efforts to advance health equity and provide essential services to all communities."

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